HOUSING

A History of Public Housing Design

forming part of the Asset Standards Edition 3
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New South Wales
Department of Housing

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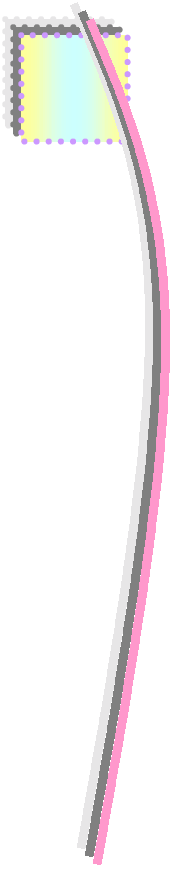

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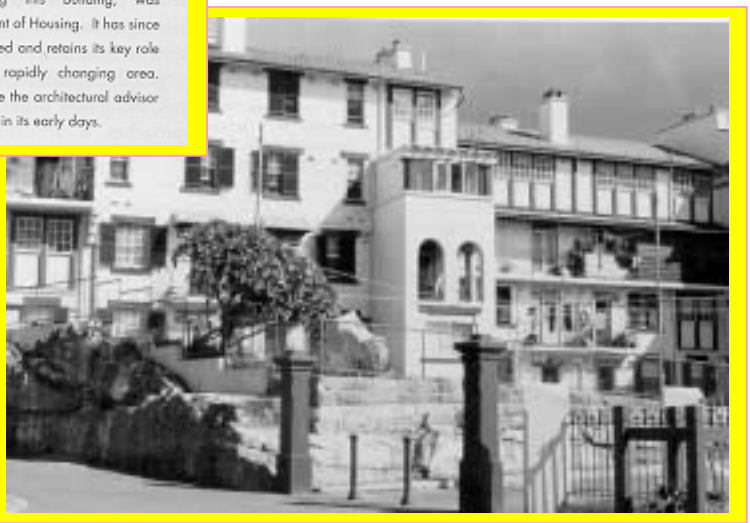
Introduction

The development of public housing design provides an intriguing insight into the eternal quest to improve our social environment by manipulating the physical environment. It is normally subservient to the larger stage of political and social movements, yet recurs through time as a focus of action.

This document provides an overview of public housing design in New South Wales. It is intended that further research will be carried out through individual heritage studies as the Department looks to its older housing for redevelopment/ conversion to match contemporary need. In this booklet there are references to the underlying social issues but the essential focus is on physical planning.

Ways Terrace, Pyrmont Point (Point Street). This unusual building has a magnificent setting on a ridge overlooking Darling Harbour and the City. It was designed by the late Leslie Wilkinson in 1927 for a competition held by the Council of the City of Sydney. In the late 1980s all the Council's low rent accommodation, including this building, was transferred to the Department of Housing. It has since been completely rehabilitated and retains its key role as public housing in a rapidly changing area. Professor Wilkinson became the architectural advisor to the Housing Commission in its early days.



Background

Public housing is a concept historically borne aloft by idealism, by notions involving the redistribution of income, of a civilised society caring for all its members. It has also been associated with the reform of physical planning, often seen as the key response to the need for housing. The fascination of reformers with better physical planning is a theme that weaves through this booklet.

The New South Wales Department of Housing has been involved in the promotion of a wide variety of housing types and has inherited a valuable portfolio of housing types from former public housing organisations.

The first public housing authority in New South Wales came as a result of the Housing Act 1912, which established the Housing Board. This Act charged the Board with developing new housing types, using new materials and new planning approaches. It came out of a reform movement led by people such as the planner John Sulman and architect Varney Parkes (son of Henry Parkes). By 1924 the Housing Board had been disbanded, its responsibilities being taken over by the Minister for Housing. With the establishment of the Housing Commission in 1942, there was once again an organisation devoted to the provision of public housing in New South Wales, and to improving social conditions through better physical planning.

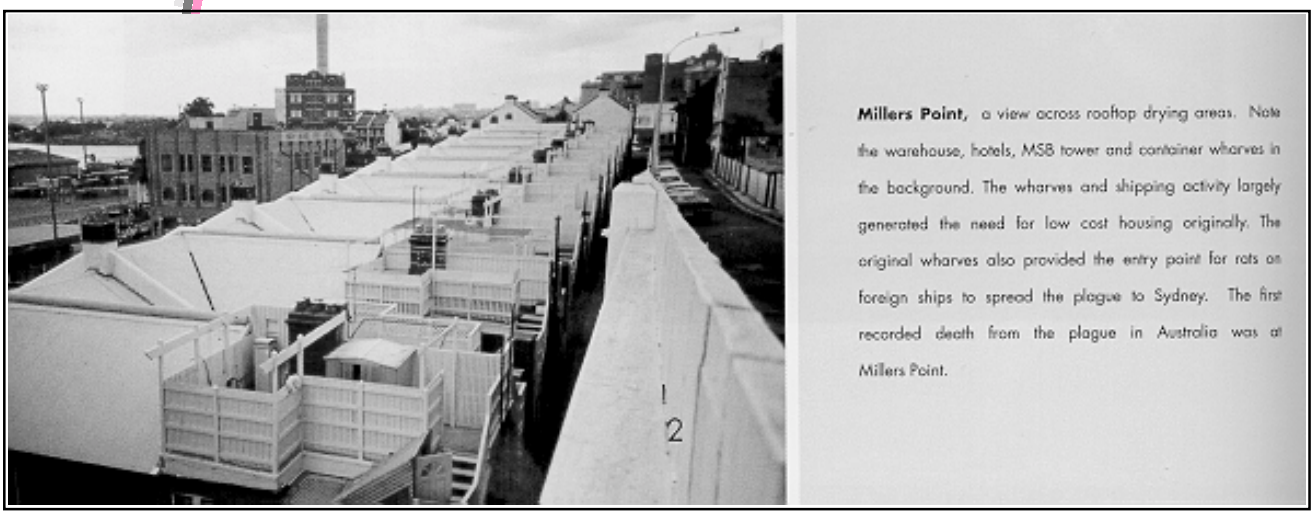
Whilst much of what was done in physical planning terms might now be assessed as lacking, the provision of basic shelter for a population previously living in slums, camped by the roadside, homeless, was a real achievement. From the comfort of a healthy, dry and warm environment we can assess the other issues that go towards making a community

The early 1900s was an important watershed for public housing in New South Wales. An argument can be made that all housing in the fledgling colony was public by nature of its ownership. However, it was at the turn of the century that new ideas about social housing as against custodial housing (gaol) came to fruition. (Arguably, for example, the first low income public housing in New South Wales was the Hyde Park Barracks. Similarly, is Cadmans Cottage the oldest extant public housing because it has always been in public ownership?)

Arguably, it is at Millers Point that public housing and public planning in a modern form were introduced to New South Wales. Millers Point was probably Australia's first major urban renewal project, requiring reconciliation of diverse issues involving existing communities' employment and housing, enhancing health and amenity, increasing the functional efficiency of the wharves and transport, and introducing new housing forms.

Since early this century, housing in Millers Point has been managed by a succession of government bodies. In 1900 properties in the area were resumed by the State Government as a result of an outbreak of plague, and two authorities established to manage the area: the Sydney Harbour Trust and The Rocks Resumption Board. The Sydney Harbour Trust initially had control of only 152 properties. However, by 1901, its portfolio had grown to 803 properties as a result of transfers from The Rocks Resumption Area, and it rented these houses at market rates.[1]

In 1908, the City Council and local progress associations agitated for the provision of working-class housing in Millers Point for the local workforce, and the Sydney Harbour Trust began building flats for waterside workers. While the Trust was providing housing for people connected with work on the wharves, it has been argued that, because houses were not allocated on a needs basis, this was not strictly public housing, but more akin to state housing.[2] For the purpose of this discussion we are including such housing as *public housing.*



Millers Point, a view across rooftop drying areas. Note the warehouse, hotels, MSB tower and container wharves in the background. The wharves and shipping activity largely generated the need for low cost housing originally. The original wharves also provided the entry point for rats on foreign ships to spread the plague to Sydney. The first recorded death from the plague in Australia was at Millers Point.

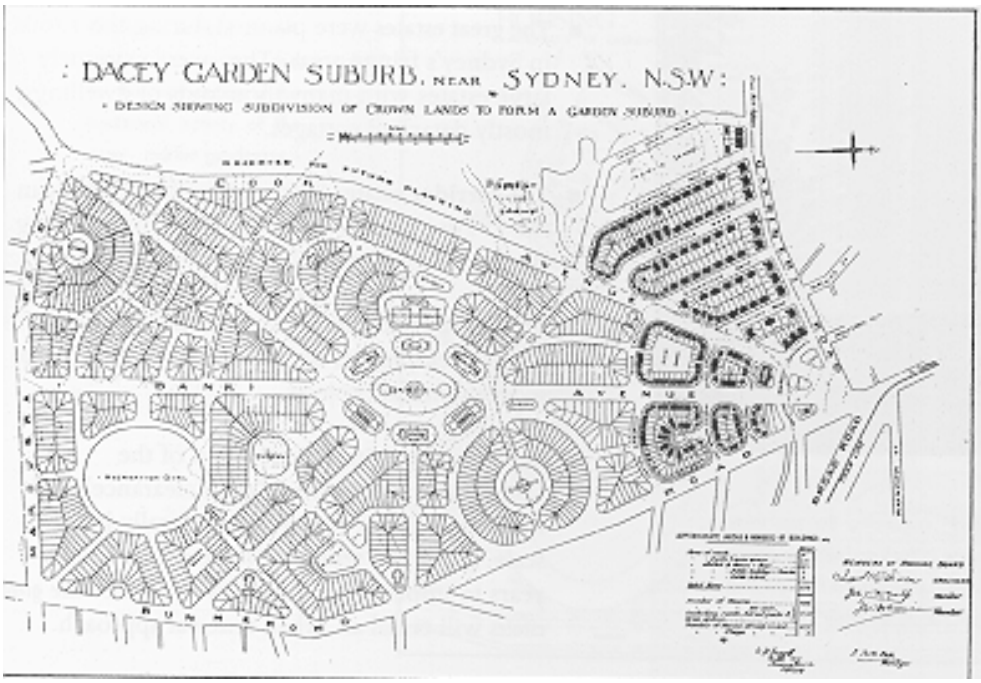
The Housing Board established in 1912 was involved briefly in Millers Point before leading the way towards suburban living at its model Dacey Gardens Estate at Daceyville, then on the southern edge of the city of Sydney. Space and air, along with sewerage and electricity, were introduced as part of the healthy garden suburb living planned by John Sulman and J F Hennessey. Although the plan was never fully realised, the suburb's tree-lined avenues, bungalow-type dwellings and parks and gardens still exist today as fine examples of the ideals of the "garden city" movement of the early twentieth century.

It was not until the 1940s that another major intervention by government in housing was to take place, with the establishment of the Housing Commission. Many of the ideas in the late 1940s were, however, similar to or derivative from the earlier period at the turn of the century. The two world wars and the Great Depression seemed to have stifled new ideas. At the same time, however, the

mechanical means of shaping the physical environment had been revolutionised because of the wars.

Just as the garden suburb had been a response to the Industrial Revolution, the post-war planners sought a new response to the social revolution heralded by the arrival of mass produced, affordable, motor cars. Walking was no longer the measure of a suburb, and public transport was seen as anachronistic in the new technological age following World War II.

The second half of the twentieth century has seen a remarkable return to a more inquisitive, original and open approach to new ideas that typified the beginning of the twentieth century. This long term, continuous interest in public housing has now sustained an internationally recognised expertise within government in New South Wales.



The original design for **Dacey Gardens** was never fully realised, however 303 cottages, 6 shops, 1 baby health clinic, a public hall and a park were eventually constructed.

The BIG PICTURE

Planning and public housing have had an interesting interaction. Health concerns following the outbreak of bubonic plague at the turn of last century prompted massive government intervention in Millers Point. The planning response took the opportunity to introduce some new roads and associated efficiencies for the wharves and port activities, but also retained most of the street pattern and housing scale.

The Housing Board set out to create a new suburban ideal at Daceyville and in many ways it was the precursor to all the estate planning and creation that occurred fifty years later. Daceyville has the beginnings of the spaghetti road layout and possibly the first planned cul-de-sac. The plan of Daceyville shows how initial street planning was based on a straight grid system, changing half way to a curvilinear grid form. Daceyville was Sydney's first "purpose-built" public housing estate, however it was to be a long time before more were conceived and developed.

The Housing Commission, after its establishment in 1942, took to estates planning in a big way. Over the following decades, a variety of approaches to estates planning evolved, the primary differences being the scale of the estates and the types of dwellings constructed.

A view of Waterloo **"Endeavour Project"** containing the two thirty storey towers. Slum clearance became high rise in parkland settings. These two pencil thin towers "Matavai" and "Turanga" represented the best and most modern thinking on housing for the aged during the early 1970s.

This section looks at five different approaches to estates planning:

- **Neighbourhood planning** was the earliest form of planning undertaken by the Commission. During the 1940s and 1950s a number of "neighbourhoods" were planned, usually consisting of between 200 and 2000 dwellings.

- **The great estates** were planned during the 1960s in Sydney's fringe areas. They were extremely large estates with many thousands of dwellings, mostly detached cottages.

- **The corridor estates** followed the great estates in the 1970s, making up a string of suburbs along the Liverpool-Campbelltown corridor.

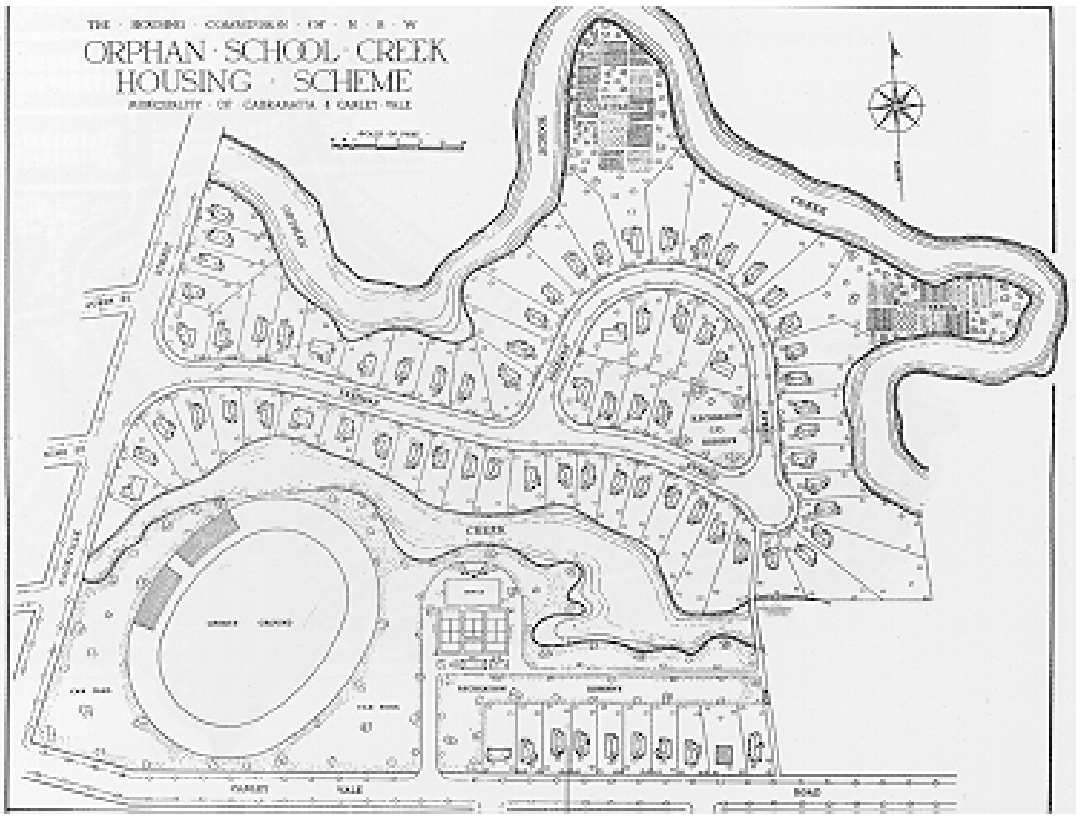
- **The micro estates** represent a return to smaller-scale development, and often consist of separate redevelopment

projects.

- **Urban renewal,** in the early days of the Commission, was called "slum clearance" and focused on inner city areas. Generally large in scale, the urban renewal projects took several years to implement. The rejuvenation of the *great estates* will entail an urban renewal approach.

A recent photograph of the loop road at **Orphan School Creek (Canley Vale).** Note the generous set-backs and modest houses.

Orphan School Creek housing scheme provided for the continuation of the traditional activity of the area - market gardening - with the inclusion of two large blocks suitable for cultivation.



Neighbourhood Planning

The first planned neighbourhood described in the Housing Commission's annual reports is Orphan School Creek at Canley Vale near Cabramatta in Sydney's south west.[3] The design guidelines are described as:

- allotments of 6,000 square feet minimum
- minimum frontage 50 feet
- desirable depth 120 feet
- min distance between houses 14 feet
- building line 25 feet
- maximum site coverage 20%

Effort was made to describe these standards to reassure the public that the new public housing was not going to be sub-standard.

In the 1951 Annual Report it is noted that the Commission *endeavours to conform to modern town planning practices wherever possible.*[4]

By 1952, estates were being planned for Villawood, North Ryde, Dundas, Maroubra and Seven Hills, and slum clearance was being undertaken at Redfern, Surry Hills and Glebe. It was also noted that major activity was planned for Windale, Toronto, Wallsend, Berkeley, Unanderra and Windang.[5]

By 1953 the Maroubra Speedway Neighbourhood Plan was being prepared. In 1954 Windale, just south of Newcastle, was underway.

These developments had not progressed the ideas first seen at Daceyville. The streets were gently curvilinear, open space was well defined and the subdivision primarily for cottages.

Throughout the years, the Commission had been planning larger and larger estates: *Estates such as Ermington, Rydalmere, Villawood, Dundas Valley, Windale (Newcastle), Unanderra and Berkeley (Wollongong) are examples of major housing estates developed by the Commission with provision for all amenities, on a scale not previously attempted in this State....*[6]

It was foreshadowed that the Commission would increasingly be involved in opening up and developing large new residential areas.[7] The Seven Hills development, for which planning had begun by the mid 1950s, was in fact the first stage of the development of a satellite town to Blacktown.

The Great Estates

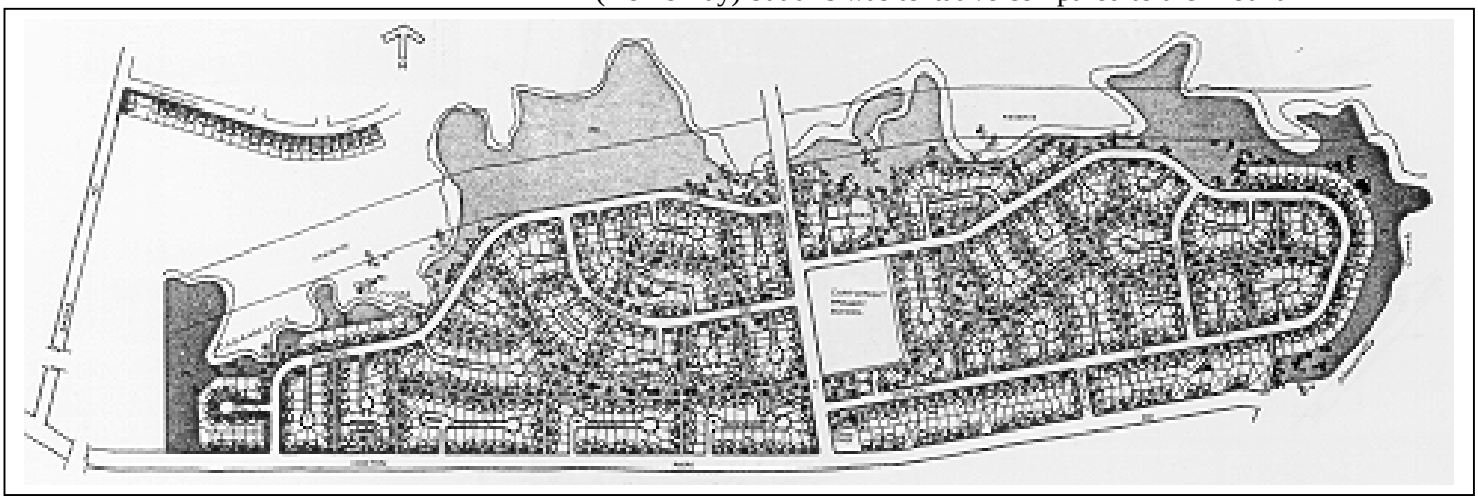
The great estates grew out of the Housing Commission's desire to build on what it considered to be the success of the smaller estates it had created up until 1960.

In 1960, the Commission was planning its largest estate yet undertaken. The Green Valley Estate near Liverpool was to house 25,000 people in 6,000 dwellings. By 1962, construction had commenced in the first suburbs of Green Valley, while planning was continuing for the later suburbs. The Commission adopted, in 1963, Radburn type planning for Cartwright, the last suburb of Green Valley to be planned. It is possibly the first Radburn planned estate in Australia.

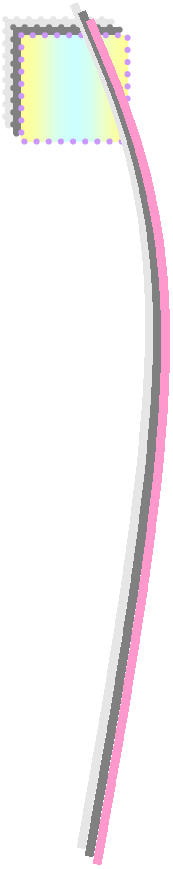
Radburn planning was comparatively new to Australia, and was also adopted by the National Capital Development Commission for suburbs in Canberra. The plan for Cartwright is based on the principle of separating, as far as possible, pedestrian and vehicular traffic. Dwellings front onto an extensive open space and pathway system, while vehicular and service access is provided by short cul-de-sacs at the rear of the dwellings. At the time, *the adoption of Radburn type planning...was received most enthusiastically by the public generally, and in particular, was favourably commented upon by many planning authorities*.[8]

Cartwright (a suburb of Green Valley west of Liverpool). Note the planning with houses facing open space and pedestrian pathways. A creek flows east west along the northern edge of the suburb.

In 1963 Mount Druitt was being planned, as a satellite town of 32,000 people. Mount Druitt was the first estate to experiment, on such a scale, with townhouses as a substitute for walk-up flats. There had been earlier attempts to explore the townhouse concept at Riverwood (Herne Bay) but this was tentative compared to the Mount



Druitt exercise. The introduction of townhouses into the later stages of Mount Druitt signalled the beginning of the townhouse era.



Concurrent with the development of these great estates was the complete abandonment of the underlying geometric structure that typified earlier planning. Curvilinear streets were made more curvilinear, the main collector road and open space meandered in ways that only a new, car orientated community could cope with. The new generation of planners were making their claim to a new era built around the promise of personalised transport for all.

The Corridor Estates

Following the great estates adventure, the Housing Commission developed a new approach of a string of smaller estates with support services in place before houses were allocated to new residents. These were generally established in the 1970s and stretch along the Liverpool - Campbelltown corridor, including suburbs such as Macquarie Fields, Minto, Claymore and Airds.

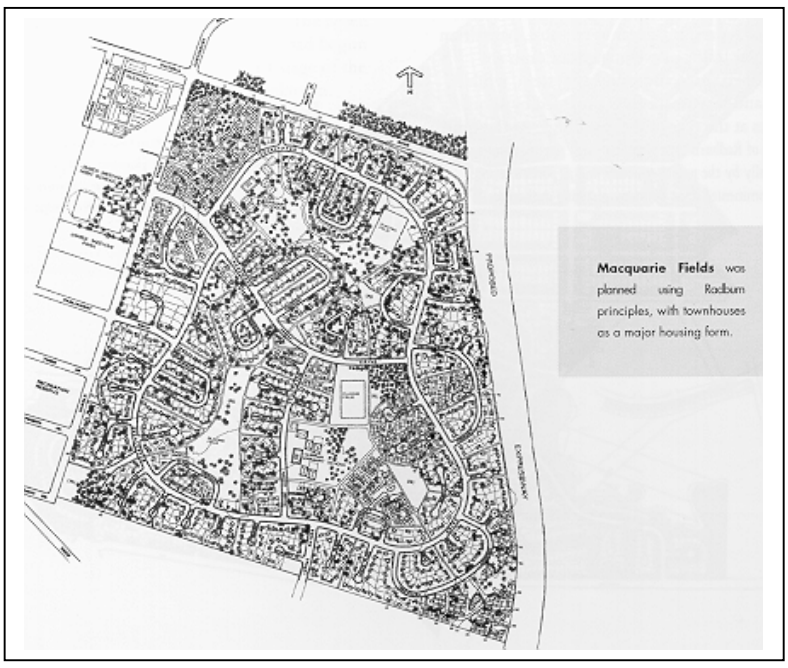
Their development coincided with the Housing Commission's move from developing large-scale, low density estates, to medium density suburbs with townhouses as a major housing type. Whilst there was some early private sector interest in townhouses for the Campbelltown area, the Housing Commission used the townhouse on a scale not seen before in NSW.

Macquarie Fields was the first and largest of the corridor estates. Four major characteristics are apparent:

- smaller overall area of development
- high percentage of townhouses
- Radburn style layout

Many of the older estates, such as Windale, had new townhouse neighbourhoods added to them. The Radburn layout, first used at Cartwright, was now being used with townhouses.

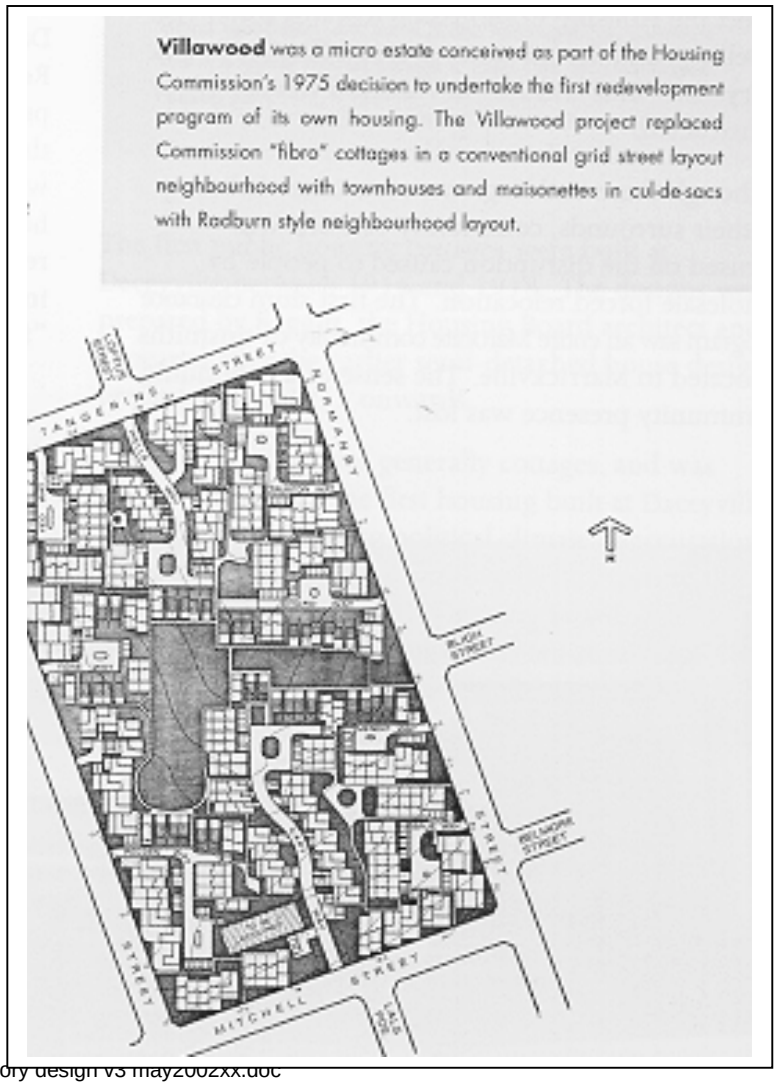
Whereas the earlier subdivisions with cottages had facilitated individual sales to public housing applicants, the new townhouse suburbs with superlot development did not. The gradual development of mixed tenure, which has characterised the larger estates such as Green Valley, most of Mount Druitt and Lalor Park, was missing from the corridor estates.



The Micro Estates

These are the smaller scale developments, typical of the 1980s. Occasionally they formed part of a larger Landcom development, but also stemmed from the Housing Commission's 1975 decision to redevelop some of its older housing in smaller parcels. Such an example is at Villawood/East Fairfield, where a redevelopment exercise involving two blocks of older fibro cottages was undertaken.

Villawood/East Fairfield was seen as an opportunity to dispense with the cottage and street pattern altogether and create a pleasant physical environment that was visually coherent. The differences with the past were underscored by the siting of all housing at 45 degrees to the existing boundary streets and existing houses. The development was essentially inward looking with the perimeter dwellings turning their backs on the existing streets. Small common driveways supplanted an existing road. Open space flowed through the development making it extremely permeable. Private yards were small, in keeping with contemporary ideas on common and private space requirements.


Villawood was a micro estate conceived as part of the Housing Commission's 1975 decision to undertake the first redevelopment program of its own housing. The Villawood project replaced Commission "fibro" cottages in a conventional grid street layout neighbourhood with townhouses and maisonettes in cul-de-sacs with Radburn style neighbourhood layout.
TANGERINE STREET
NORMANDY
BLIGH STREET
MITCHELL STREET

Urban Renewal

The major urban renewal projects following Millers Point were the *slum clearance* initiatives. Redfern, Surry Hills and Waterloo, immediately to the south of the Sydney CBD, were the focus for much of this activity. It commenced in the 1940s and was still active in the 1970s. The approach was always dominated by the desire to remove the slums. The housing types that replaced the original disgraced terrace housing were initially modest one, two and three storey brick walk-up flats and maisonettes.

By the 1960s high-rise buildings with lifts were the predominant form culminating in the "Endeavour Estate" at Waterloo with two 30 storey towers for the aged. During the 1970s there were attempts to direct the Housing Commission towards lower rise dwellings and the six storey stepped flats known as "Drysdale" and "Dobell" at Waterloo were constructed.

Although these buildings were less overwhelming to their surrounds, community concern was focused on the disruption caused to people by wholesale forced relocation. The first slum clearance program saw an entire Maronite community of tinsmiths relocated to Marrickville. The sense of a continuing community presence was lost.

By the 1980s a reluctant Housing Commission was to adopt a friendlier approach with the rehabilitation and infill concept first promoted by the Commonwealth Government at Glebe in 1973.

The Whitlam Labor Government (1972-75) had signalled its interest in urban affairs and, following its intervention in the Glebe Estate, sought to include the Housing Commission and Sydney City Council in the revitalisation of Woolloomooloo. This would be the first time the Housing Commission was introduced to rehabilitation of terrace houses, a notion that had previously been abhorrent to it because of the association of that housing form with disease and overcrowding.

By the mid 1980s there were five major urban renewal estates undergoing rehabilitation and infill development. These were Waterloo, Glebe, Daceyville, Millers Point and Lyndhurst. Since the 1980s urban renewal has again shifted emphasis from historic inner city areas to middle ring suburbs of older "fibro" cottage style housing

Waterloo (just south of Sydney CBD) provides an excellent example of all the different approaches to urban renewal, from redevelopment to rehabilitation, from single storey to multi-storey high rise. Elizabeth and Wellington Streets are the main through streets. The project illustrated is in Raglan Street and represents the rehabilitation and infill approach.

The LITTLE HOUSES

A typical association of public housing in New South Wales is the "*little fibro boxes"*. It is true that the substantial majority of the nearly 200,000 dwellings constructed by the Housing Commission and Department of Housing since 1945 have been modest in size and frugal in finishes. The "fibro" sheeting first used sparingly in 1910 came into widespread use as an affordable alternative to weatherboards during the 1950s.

However, there is much more to public housing dwellings than fibro cottages and this section indicates the range and innovation involved.

The Different Types

The following pages consider five categories of housing: the cottage, the apartment, the attached type, mixed types and specialist housing.

The cottage types can also be referred to as *detached, bungalows, houses.*

Apartments includes *flats, three storey walk up flats, high rise, multi-unit, stepped flats.*

Attached includes *semi-detached, terrace houses, townhouses, row houses, patio houses, zero-lot line.*

Mixed Types has includes to consider: *mixed uses* and *mixed dwelling types* where

Specialist Housing includes all other work undertaken by the public housing authority

The Cottage

The cottage has been the mainstay of public housing in New South Wales through most of the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s. The 1946 Annual Report of the Housing Commission describes the cottage as *the most popular type of dwelling in this country*.[9]

The first public housing cottages were built at Daceyville between 1914 and 1918. The designs were prepared by Foggitt, the Housing Board architect and appeared after the earlier semi-detached house designs prepared from 1912 onwards.

The later housing was generally cottages, and was more modest than the first housing built at Daceyville, reflecting the changing political climate as accusations of excessive expenditure and contractors rorting the system were levelled at the Housing Board. This frugality and occasional meanness is a recurring characteristic of public housing. Private building contractors were replaced by Public Works employees as the change from semi-detached dwellings to cottages occurred.

DACEYVILLE (Dacey Gardens Suburb, Gardeners and Bunnerong Roads, near Kingsford and the University of New South Wales). A particularly pleasant suburb that remains predominantly publicly owned and which has avoided the stigma associated with some public housing areas elsewhere. This is a typical modest cottage c. 1916 - still the most popular housing form.

Many different construction materials were used on the cottages, including interlocking concrete blocks (*Samson Blocks*), concrete roof tiles, calcium silicate bricks, clay shingles, and plywood covered in a bituminous felt for roofing. Whilst the earlier semi-detached dwellings were predominantly face brick with render accent, the cottages were predominantly rendered, usually as rough cast finish.

After the demise of the Housing Board very little happened in public housing design until the establishment of the Housing Commission of New South Wales in 1942. The first dwellings were constructed by the Public Works Government Architects Branch, just as in 1910 when the Sydney Harbour Trust sought to construct new dwellings for working men at Millers Point.

The advances in public housing design were often very modest. In 1951 the Commission noted that *to improve and facilitate siting, new cottage designs have been prepared and there has been a marked improvement during the year in the siting of projects.*[10] Also noted that year was an experimental group of twelve cottages with 8 foot (2.4 metres) ceilings.[11] In 1952 the Commission announced the introduction of gable roof cottage types to *assist in adding interest to various street schemes.*[12]

The concern with building materials and costs also led to the introduction of "economy type cottages" at New Lambton in 1954. A year later "Benwell type Low Cost Dwellings (T.228)" were introduced.

In 1958 there were skillion roof cottages *designed by the Commission's architectural staff and erected at North Ryde [which] proved very popular.*[13] By 1962 *four new contemporary type cottages, a feature of which was the provision of a car port* had been added to the design portfolio.[14] In 1965 *greater variety in roof design and external cladding* was announced along with new front fence designs.[15]

A view of cottages at **Orphan School Creek, Canley Vale** development described earlier. Finishes are predominantly "fibro".

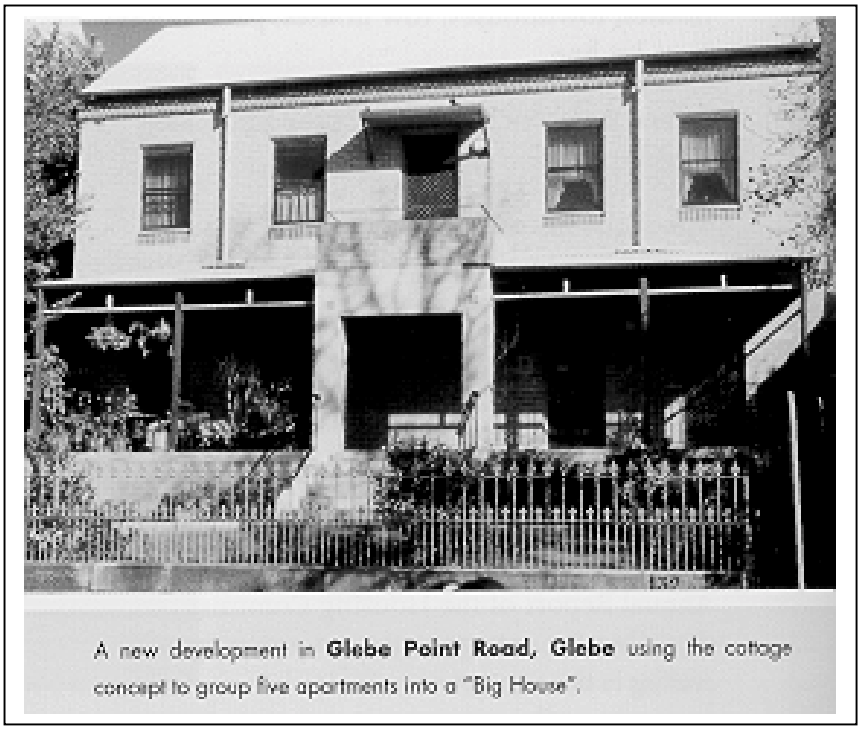
With the increasing use of the townhouse in the 1970s, the designs of cottages remained stagnant until 1981 when new cottage designs were introduced.

In 1981 the cottage became the first dwelling type to trial a solar village concept at Bonnyrigg. As a research project several cottages with varying solar adaptations were monitored by University of NSW. The project was supported by the National Energy Research Development and Demonstration Council plus the Energy Authority of NSW.

Unfortunately, although the Department of Housing revised its water heating specifications and siting guidelines following this experiment, the adoption of the more unusual solar technology failed to happen. It would not be until 1995 that the Department adopted an Ecologically Sustainable Development (ESD) policy.

Cottage construction gradually diminished in metropolitan areas, being replaced by medium density housing, but it has remained the workhorse of the rural communities. For country areas the Department introduced a special range of designs called the

Country Houses in 1993. These were unlike any predecessor, with basic floor plans for a variety of accommodation needs and a range of add-on decorative elements and roof types allowing individual houses for identified future residents.



A new development in **Glebe Point Road, Glebe** using the cottage concept to group five apartments into a "Big House".

The Apartment

The apartment has been part of public housing since the beginning of public housing. It comes in many forms, including high rise, walk up flats, pensioner units, maisonettes, Turner-Rigbys and duplexes.

Millers Point provides the first public housing apartment buildings. These were similar in concept to the Stevens Building, a four storey block of flats also at Millers Point built by Kathleen Stevens in 1900 as a boarding house (claimed to be the first apartment building in Sydney).[16] The apartments were based on existing single storey dwelling plans with a verandah connecting the rooms within each apartment and acting as an entry landing from the staircase. The open staircase connected the levels with the apartments stacked in pairs either side of the stair.

Stevens Building, 73 Windmill Street, Millers Point - the first block of flats in Sydney.

This area also has the earliest examples of maisonettes (multi-level apartments) known to the Department at Cumberland Street Rocks, c1900.

When the Housing Commission looked for dwelling types suitable for its inner city slum clearance, and for making a statement in selected country towns, the apartment was the preferred type. It had developed whilst public housing had withered, although two notable examples by Sydney City Council, the Strickland Building in Chippendale and Ways Terrace at Pyrmont, did offer innovation in the period following the demise of the Housing Board.

It is interesting to note that the Strickland Building *was reputed to have a net population density of 600 persons per acre 91,500 per hectare), about three times the density of 1970s high rise Housing Commission flats.*[17]

In 1948/49 193 flats were completed, in 1949/50 364 flats were completed. These flats were at Orange, Albury, Wagga Wagga, Bathurst, Parkes, Cowra, Cootamundra, Dubbo and Queanbeyan, reflecting the importance of those areas at that time.

Lower Fort Street, Millers Point, possibly the first public housing apartments in New South Wales.

In 1951, with Professor Leslie Wilkinson from Sydney University (and the designer of Ways Terrace) as the Commission's architectural advisor, and architect F W Turner as one of the five Board members, the Commission announced the development of new maisonette types[18]. The Commission had two large apartment projects underway in 1951 at Balmain and North Sydney but by 1953 the Commission announced its largest flats project as "Greenway" at North Sydney. This project contained 309 flats, of which 192 were one bedroom and 117 were two bedroom. It comprised four blocks with the largest eleven storeys high. The *special facilities*

The Strickland Building c.1917. This four storey Edwardian Building by the City Architect, Broderick, has been claimed as the highest density housing development until the construction of the high-rise T&G building in the Sydney CBD in the 1930s.

included lift, laundry drying cabinets, and garbage disposal chutes.

In 1953 “Robert Mahony Place” in Balmain was constructed and “Gocher Court” in Manly was constructed in 1954. These projects contained 175 and 100 units respectively, and were second in size only to the Greenway project.

A new type of multi-unit block of self-contained three bedroom flats, each flat having its own entrance, was developed in 1953. The design became known as a “Turner-Rigby”, being developed by Housing Commissioners A L Rigby and F W Turner. By 1955 there were Turner Rigby apartments at Raglan Street Waterloo in the slum clearance area.

Cumberland Street, The Rocks, a view showing the top maisonettes (top two floors) with access from the covered verandah. The lower maisonettes are accessed from the colonnade below and have a basement level that opens onto a rear laneway.

In 1959 the first 45 “new type aged units” were completed, although two years earlier the Commission was housing elderly couples in semi-detached dwellings at Matraville. The Commission described them as *brick duplex type cottage[s]*.[19]

The apartment complexes grew larger and larger in scale as the Commission became more confident. These included the 429 unit “John Northcott Place” (1960), and a design by architects Morrow and Gordon for “William McKell Place” at

Typical 1950s Housing Commission flats development, this example at **Glebe.** The area has been subject to several attempts at redevelopment since the 1880s by the Church of England, the Council of the City of Sydney, the Housing Commission and the Commonwealth.

Moorehead and Redfern Streets, Redfern with 284 flats (1961).

"Sirius" a prominent high rise complex undertaken in the 1970s at the Rocks, adjacent to the Harbour Bridge approach. It was constructed for residents displaced by the redevelopment activity in the area. The original concept for a precast concrete building system was modified to a conventional concrete frame construction, retaining the appearance of the original system. Some units are split-level in configuration.

In 1962/63 the number of apartments constructed by the Commission since its inception was 8,102 with an additional 1,409 aged units. Cottages exceeded 66,000.

In 1963/64 Harry Seidler was designing a nine storey apartment complex at Eastlakes for the Commission. It was to contain 153 two bedroom apartments, 52 three bedroom apartments and 20 apartments for the aged. It incorporated a concept of stacking the maisonette style dwellings so access is only required every second level.

A new range of three storey walk up flats incorporating a central courtyard was introduced in 1964/65. They were first constructed at South Coogee.

The early 1970s saw the ultimate expression of high rise apartment housing at the "Endeavour Estate" at Waterloo. Four seventeen storey buildings and two thirty storey buildings were constructed on three neighbourhood blocks. The late 1970s saw the last gasp of the slum clearance approach with the construction of two groups of a stepped apartments adjacent to the Endeavour project. The interesting thing to note with these two later projects is that the floor plans were derived from existing "L" shaped, single storey townhouse types that were stacked on top of each other. This idea of using contemporary single storey dwellings as a unit model for flat buildings was similar to that used to design the Stevens building at Millers Point some 80 years earlier.

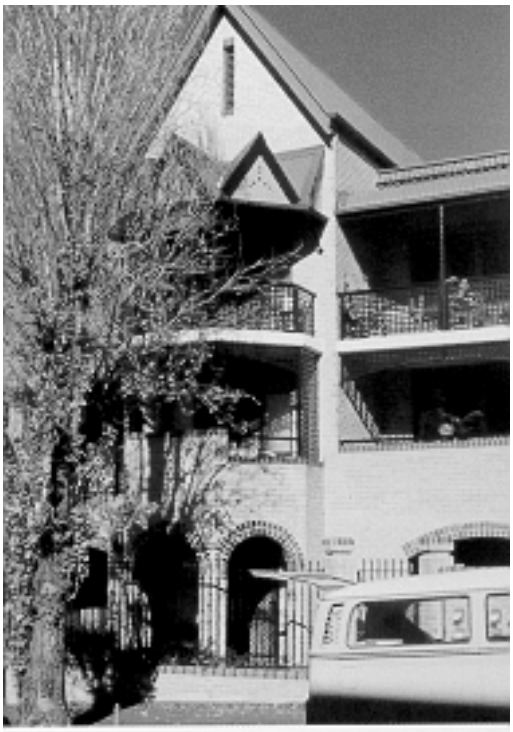
During the 1980s the three storey walk up flat was virtually abandoned, being replaced by the townhouse.

In the 1990s there is a renewed interest in the apartment form, particularly combining low rise flats with hydraulic lifts to provide barrier free access for all units. Integration of apartments with shops and offices are also being explored. These are being considered for strategically well located positions near regional and sub-regional centres and public transport hubs.

The huge scale of the **John Northcott Place** is apparent from this view of the entry.

The **"Big House"** apartment concept was first developed at **Daceyville** in 1982. This design maximised space through higher density housing while giving the single, "big house" appearance enabling it to sit comfortably with the surrounding structures.

Manly - from historic Salvation Army Hostel to apartment block.



Glebe - apartments configured to form a modern version of a boarding house.

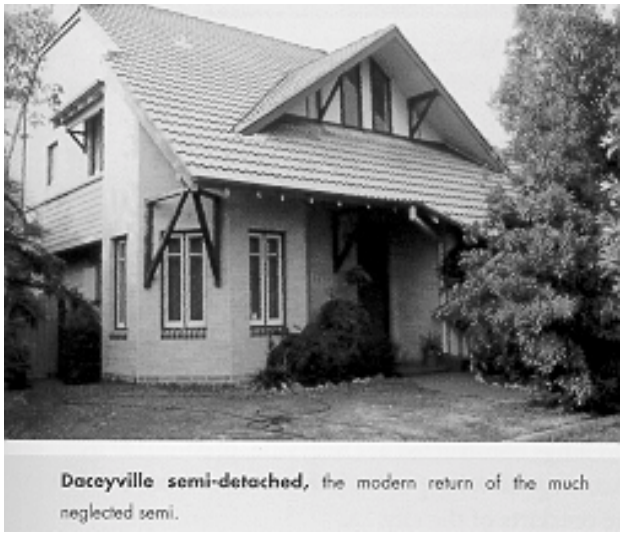
The Attached Dwellings

Semi-Detached

The oldest dwelling at Waterloo owned by the Department is a semi-detached cottage thought to be from the 1830s.

When the Housing Board was undertaking its first venture into suburban living it used the semi-detached model. These dwellings at Daceyville are reasonably generous in size and had the WC attached to the rear of the dwelling, being for the first time designed as sewered dwellings. Most also had a large rear verandah for use as a sleepout to augment the usual two bedrooms provided.

Although the Housing Commission focused on cottages and some flats for most of its first three decades, it did offer a semi-detached dwelling for some. Its 1957 annual report notes *accommodation for elderly couples has been provided in this brick duplex type cottage erected at Matraville.*[20]



Daceyville semi-detached, the modern return of the much neglected semi.

Ironically the first modern semi-detached dwellings were constructed at Daceyville (Wills Crescent) in 1986. With the introduction of the concept of *dual occupancy* in 1988 the semi-detached housing form became popular again. It provided most of the advantages of a cottage yet better utilised the dwindling land resource. It was particularly suited to smaller households. The Department of Housing had an alternative to the townhouse in the semi-detached, and, in fact, found it could achieve similar efficiencies. One of the first such projects was proposed for Casula, near Liverpool.

Row Housing

The first new row housing undertaken in public housing was at Millers Point, in Windmill Street. These dwellings are a 1910 version of the traditional terrace house found elsewhere in Millers Point. They are two storey with distinctive gable presentations to

the street. The Housing Board and Housing Commission were extremely reluctant to build terrace style dwellings so the Windmill Street examples are atypical. Much more common was the two storey flats arrangement (see High Street, for example) which often appears similar to the Windmill Street dwellings from the street. It was not until 50 years after these terrace dwellings were constructed that the Housing Commission again considered a similar form.

Ironically, the Commission's aged housing program was substantially accommodated in single storey bed-sitter type flats that were joined as a row housing form. However, the Commission saw them and described them as "flats".

During 1962/63 the Commission constructed *a new type of terrace housing* at Matraville.[21] Almost the identical dwellings at Chullora were described one year later as row houses.[22] Patio houses were introduced at Riverwood in 1963/64. These were designed by private architects following the observation that: *with the difficulties associated with the recruitment of qualified, competent architectural staff, increasing use was made of the services of private architects in the development of flats projects and projects of architectural significance*.[23]

Row Housing in Windmill Street, **Millers Point.** The first and only true two storey terrace housing in public housing until 1981.

As community concern grew with the number and style of three storey flats being built by the development industry, the Commission itself was forced to consider alternatives. The re-introduction of row or terrace houses as *townhouses* occurred at Mount Druitt on sites originally set aside for flats. The townhouse era had commenced.

In 1975 the Commission won a *Daily Telegraph Housing Industry Award* for townhouses at Riverwood. There was an important difference between the terrace form at Millers Point and the townhouse concept. Whereas the terrace house has a direct street frontage and separate title, the townhouse does not. Townhouse developments tended to follow the flats model rather than the terrace house or cottage model. The Commission was not alone in this perception with most planning authorities adapting flats codes to townhouses. The result has been common driveways, common open space and small private yards and a dominance of carports and car parking provision. The public domain has withdrawn and

become distant from the dwelling. The Commission compounded the confusion by introducing Radburn planning to the siting of townhouses.

The first modern terrace houses constructed by the Commission were at Cunningham Street, North Sydney in 1981. Significantly, this was in partnership with Council, who suggested the idea and allowed on-street parking to be the only provision for the car.

The terraces at North Sydney also introduced much tighter 4 metre frontages, more akin to traditional terraces. Most townhouses were in excess of 6 metres in width. By 1984 the first 4 metre wide three storey terraces were designed for Wentworth Park Road at Glebe. The 1980s heralded the return of the true terrace type, some 70 years since the Windmill Street experiment.

Two storey flats in High Street, **Millers Point.**

Mixed Types

Again, Millers Point provides the first examples of public housing mixed with other uses. Very early on, shops were integrated with housing (c1911). Later, after some anguish about encouraging alcohol usage, the Sydney Harbour Trust constructed hotels which incorporated rooms that became low income long term accommodation.

The Housing Board integrated shops and housing at Daceyville in General Bridges Crescent. The dwellings were to be the most generous of all the dwellings constructed at Daceyville, presumably to encourage shopkeepers to live in a new suburb on the outskirts of the city.

The Housing Commission also mixed shops and housing, occasionally including a rental collection office as well. The Commission's first *modern shopping centre, situated at South Granville, ... has been designed to harmonise with the tone of the surrounding neighbourhood*.[24] The South Granville shops were integrated with apartments over to create two storeys. In 1948 the Commission was proposing a three storey apartments/shops complex at Westmead.

Millers Point, shops, boarding houses and flats, Argyle Place and Kent Street, mixing uses and housing types.

As it became more established, the Housing Commission appears to have avoided integration of uses and different house types. The reasons for this may be to do with the large numbers of cottages that were being produced by the organisation. Such a large production rate encouraged a systematised approach, much as project builders have today, i.e. a range of standardised houses that are sited many

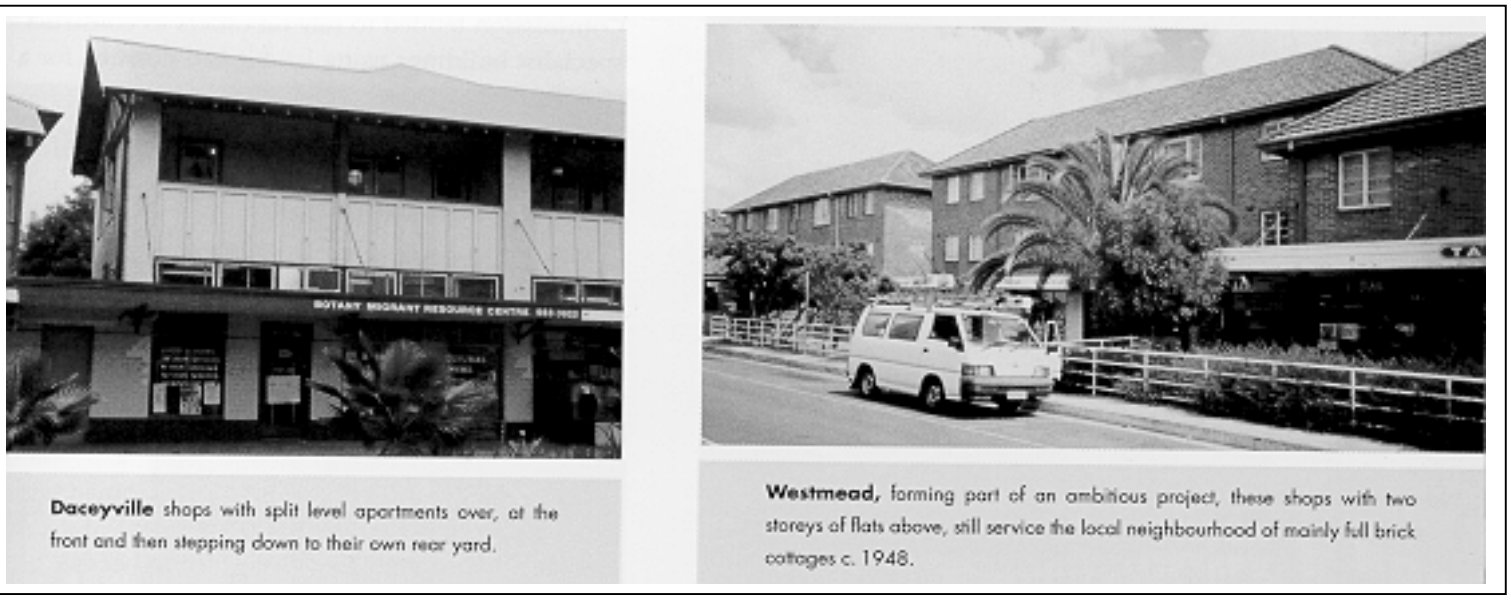
times. The Commission applied that system to nearly all its house types, so apartments became blocks of apartments to be sited again and again like cottages rather than individual apartments put together to suit a particular site. For some reason the pensioner housing escaped this system and was always individualised to each site.

The Commission rarely integrated its different house types, even keeping single storey and two storey pensioner development separate, although sometimes adjacent to each other. In the 1970s the first integrated one and two storey pensioner developments were designed for Peakhurst and Chullora.

In 1981, in a partnership with North Sydney Council, the first public housing integrating a multi-storey public car park was designed at Crows Nest.

In 1983, the first apartment and terrace house integrated development was designed for Wentworth Park Road, Glebe. This was followed in 1988 by the Walker Street, Waterloo design, which had terrace houses with piggy-back apartments.

In 1992 at Pyrmont, the Department designed a complex integrating terrace houses, shops and apartments. The concepts of adaptability and flexibility were introduced in this project with the shops being capable of easy conversion to one bedroom apartments and the larger area given to some apartments to provide an alcove for stays by visitors/carers.



Daceyville shops with split level apartments over, at the front and then stepping down to their own rear yard.

Westmead, forming part of an ambitious project, these shops with two storeys of flats above, still service the local neighbourhood of mainly full brick cottages c. 1948.

The **Pyrmont** project under construction. This is a landmark project consisting of four seperate apartment blocks conceived as "big houses". The project is in Bowman Street adjacent to Wilkinson's "Ways Terrace" building. Public housing maintains its presence in a rapidly changing area to protect the existing residents.

Specialist Types

A child care facility at High Street, Millers Point was constructed by the Sydney Harbour Trust as part of the housing. The Trust also constructed a boarding house style building In Argyle Place with two standards of accommodation depending on a resident's status within the merchant marine. In Daceyville, the Housing Board constructed a high quality electricity sub station and a Baby Health Centre.

The Housing Commission did not design the range of buildings the Housing Board and Sydney Harbour Trust did. This included specialist buildings for community support purposes. The Commission tended to rely on others to construct specialist buildings using land it had donated for a specific use.

However, it did retrofit dwellings for individual specialist needs, such as barrier free access for wheelchairs. In 1985 it noted as an innovation *portable ramps for the disabled*.[25] The Commission also designed and constructed specialist housing for other agencies including the Defence forces, Police, Electricity Commission, Forestry, Maritime Services Board (light house keepers), Teachers and Public Servants.

In 1986 the Housing Commission was joined with other agencies to become the Department of Housing. From then specialist housing became a significant stream of activity as community demands for alternatives to mainstream housing products grew. From this period onwards there were women's refuges, youth refuges, hostels, group homes, boarding houses, child care centres, community centres, housing for the Aboriginal community, youth centres and primary health care posts.

Top right: A Primary Health Care Post for the **Tingha Aboriginal Community** funded and conceived by NSW Health, designed by the Department of Housing's Design Branch.

Centre: **Daceyville Baby Health Centre** - 3 Wills Crescent, Daceyville, no longer serves the purpose of early childhood health support and has been converted to pensioner housing.

Lower right: **Darling House** Trinity Avenue, Millers Point, a grand house that became a warehouse and was then converted to a hostel.

Below: A church was converted to loft apartments for single people at Wellington Street, **Waterloo** - a specialist building converted to housing c. 1990.

Notes

1. Fitzgerald & Keating, 1991: 76.
2. Fitzgerald & Keating, 1991: 78-79.
3. Housing Commission of NSW, 1948: 8.
4. Housing Commission of NSW, 1951c: 5.
5. Housing Commission of NSW, 1951c: 6.
6. Housing Commission of NSW, 1956: 11.
7. Housing Commission of NSW, 1956: 11.
8. Housing Commission of NSW, 1964: 16.
9. Housing Commission of NSW, 1948: 11.
10. Housing Commission of NSW, 1951c: 5.
11. Housing Commission of NSW, 1951c: 16.
12. Housing Commission of NSW, 1952: 9.
13. Housing Commission of NSW, 1959: 11.
14. Housing Commission of NSW, 1963: 17.
15. Housing Commission of NSW, 1966: 23.
16. Plaque on front wall of Stevens building
17. Cardew, 1980: 70.
18. Housing Commission of NSW, 1951c: 16.
19. Housing Commission of NSW, 1958: 21.
20. Housing Commission of NSW, 1958: 21.
21. Housing Commission of NSW, 1964, 23.
22. Housing Commission of NSW, 1966, 42.
23. Housing Commission of NSW, 1965, 18.
24. Housing Commission of NSW, 1949a, .
25. Housing Commission of NSW, *Annual Report 1985*, p14.

Some Key Designers

- **McCrae**
  McCrae was Government Architect when the Sydney Harbour Trust and the Housing Board were established. These organisations turned to the Government Architects Branch of Public Works for assistance.

- **Sulman**
  Sulman was responsible for the curved street layout of Daceyville

- **Foggitt**
  Foggitt was the Housing Board's architect and is generally seen as responsible for the cottage designs at Daceyville from 1913 onwards.

- **Professor Leslie Wilkinson**
  Wilkinson had a distinguished career and was architectural advisor to the Housing Commission in its early years.

- **J (Jack) Lindsay Sever**
  Sever was responsible for the introduction of new designs during the 1960's. His designs stand out as well proportioned with larger windows, better use of different materials and were the first to include an integrated car port.

- **E (Ted) Mack**
  Mack was active in the early 1970's, trying to change the high rise program to lower rise "garden apartments". He engaged John Anderson to design an innovative apartment project at Malabar that could be a model for an alternative to the high rise. Mack introduced the modern townhouse concept. He was later to become Mayor of North Sydney and continued to promote new ideas in public housing design through partnerships between Council and the Commission.

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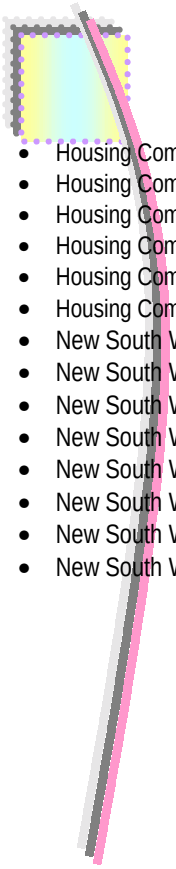

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